

THE WISE INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN (WIC) ACT OF 2021

ROSA L. DELAURO (CT-03)

This bipartisan legislation, The Wise Investment in Children Act of 2021 (WIC Act), is a critical step toward resolving nutrition gaps and assuring continued access to the vital services provided by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), paving the way for a healthier next generation.

WIC is a strong investment in our country's future. WIC serves approximately 6.3 million pregnant and postpartum individuals, infants, and young children up to age five. For nearly 50 years, WIC has contributed to healthier pregnancies, improved birth outcomes for low-income women and infants, and healthier growth and development for young children. WIC's access to healthy foods provides families with a greater variety and nutritional quality in their diets. WIC is a proven and cost-effective program that more than doubles the return on the initial investment in medical, educational, and productivity cost-savings.

The WIC Act expands eligibility for children to receive benefits under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The WIC Act:

ADDRESSES A CRUCIAL GAP IN NUTRITION ASSISTANCE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.

The WIC Act would extend eligibility through age six or the beginning of kindergarten. Extending WIC eligibility for children by one year—until their sixth birthday— would ensure that no children are slipping through the nutrition gap between WIC and the National School and Breakfast Lunch Programs. This ensures that all children who are income-qualified can make a seamless transition between WIC and school lunch, sustaining WIC's nutritional support during a period of development that could determine a child's educational and future success.

REDUCES ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES AS INFANT DIETS DEVELOP.

The WIC Act would extend certification periods for infants to two years instead of one year, eliminating duplicative paperwork and encouraging families to continue to connect their children with WIC's nutrition supports. The burdensome one-year certification requirement is an unnecessary barrier to participant access, deterring parents from continuing to obtain nutrition support on behalf of their children at a time of transition in the child's diets.

ADDRESSES THE CRISIS OF MATERNAL MORTALITY.

The WIC Act would extend eligibility for postpartum women to two years, building upon the program's nutrition support and efforts to improve diets. Increased eligibility for postpartum women can sustain and advance diet and nutrition outcomes during the inter-pregnancy interval, improving health outcomes in subsequent pregnancies.

Overall, the WIC Act is a critical step to strengthening WIC's ability to improve maternal and child health. These additional steps to expand eligibility and reduce administrative barriers will ensure that the next generation is healthier and more productive.

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